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Chairman:	Ms. Kusorgbor (Vice-Chairman)	(Ghana)
later:	Mr. Kuchinsky (Chairman)	(Ukraine)
later:	Ms. Kusorgbor (Vice-Chairman)	(Ghana)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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In the absence of Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Ms. Kusorgbor (Ghana), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 95: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.14)

1. **Mr. Al-Sulaiti** (Qatar) introduced, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.14 entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing". Azerbaijan, Belarus, Mexico, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation had joined the sponsors.

Agenda item 96: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.21)

2. **Mr. Tesfu** (Ethiopia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.21 entitled "United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders" on behalf of the Group of African States.

Agenda item 98: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/59/38, Parts I and II, A/59/135, 185 and Corr.1, 281, 313 and 357)

Agenda item 99: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/59/115, 214 and 281)

3. **Ms. Nuñez de Odremán** (Venezuela) said that her Government had taken steps to put an end to discrimination and achieve gender equity. They included providing better access by the poor to the means of production, public services and decision-making, the establishment of policies and structures to ensure gender equity, and expansion of the legal framework to ensure equality. A national office for the protection of women's rights had been established in 2003, as part of the National Plan for Women's Equality. On the international level, Venezuela was party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had submitted all its required reports in a timely manner. It had also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

4. She described several of the measures taken to counteract the feminization of poverty in Venezuela, along with programmes in support of women's economic rights and strategies to promote women's literacy and access to secondary and university education.

5. The Violence against Women and the Family Act had been supplemented by a National Plan of Action 2000-2005, which included a national toll-free telephone hotline providing support to victims of family violence and a number of women's shelters. Venezuela had also ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. To prevent the sale of and trafficking in children, general guidelines had been established for national and international adoptions.

6. Venezuela welcomed the progress made in revitalizing the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Sufficient resources for it to carry out its work were still needed, however.

7. Many of the obstacles to the advancement of women resulted from the current international system, which fostered poverty and exclusion. New, people-centred development models were needed before women could expect to enjoy their rights to the fullest extent.

8. **Mr. Yahya** (Djibouti) said that, although the international community had established a legal framework reaffirming women's fundamental rights, those rights could be put into practice only in an environment of security in such areas as food, health, employment and education. The Convention, for example, was nearing universality with 174 ratifications, but abject poverty was the main obstacle to its full implementation in many parts of the world. The United Nations should take the lead in finding new approaches and integrating a gender perspective into all its policies and programmes. Better coordination among the specialized agencies and the international financial system was important to the least-developed countries.

9. His delegation welcomed the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) strategy on ways and means to promote access by women to decision-making positions in governance and peace-

building. UNIFEM support had helped women in neighbouring Somalia retain the seats they had won in the provisional parliament. He also drew attention to the plight of Palestinian women living under occupation and deprived of their most basic rights. Trafficking in persons was another danger to the most vulnerable groups during armed conflict. Accordingly, his Government had just ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols. His delegation renewed its proposal to observe a United Nations year or decade against trafficking in persons.

10. Djibouti, at the crossroads between Africa and the Arabian peninsula, had adopted a strategy and plan of action for the integration of women which had involved major investment in the health and education sectors, women's participation in the economy and efforts targeted at increasing their political participation; women currently held 12 per cent of seats in the National Assembly.

11. Limited resources would prevent his country from achieving its objectives for the advancement of women, and therefore, he called for more assistance from the international community through such agencies as UNIFEM to allow countries like his to reach their goals.

12. **Mr. Ahmad Shabery** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, with the signing by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region, all 10 ASEAN countries had committed themselves to that issue. The regional Plan of Action also included women's issues among its priorities, and regional programmes for the advancement of women were receiving increased attention. At the forthcoming ASEAN Summit, leaders would consider further action to promote women's participation in politics and the work force.

13. The ASEAN Committee on Women was responsible for coordination and monitoring of women's issues, and provided a forum for exchange of views and sharing of experience. It issued a regular status report, and maintained strong links with Governments and non-governmental partners.

14. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda), recalling that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been drafted in order to strengthen existing human-rights instruments, said that much nevertheless remained to be done before women enjoyed equal rights with men.

15. Since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, Uganda had prioritized poverty eradication, income generation, reproductive health, decision-making and girls' education in its efforts to provide social, economic and political rights to women. Legal frameworks were being put in place: exploitation of women was prohibited and a bill outlawing polygamy and domestic violence had been introduced in Parliament.

16. Equal pay for equal work was guaranteed under the Constitution. Implementation of the Constitution, a gender-sensitive document, was the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

17. Steps were being taken to eliminate gender bias in the school curriculum and gender mainstreaming in health policy had contributed to providing genuine health for all. Law reforms granting women the right to inherit property and engage in trade had meant that women could contribute to family incomes and thereby better sustain their communities.

18. **Daw Maw Maw** (Myanmar) said that her Government was conducting extensive research into the issue of violence against women, and had taken remedial and preventive measures to tackle the problem.

19. To deal with trafficking in persons, a comprehensive framework of national legislation and bilateral, regional and international cooperation had been put in place. Myanmar had acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and was drafting legislation in accordance with those instruments. Efforts were being made to improve the policy environment to make it easier to combat trafficking.

20. She noted that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, in an earlier report, had confirmed that the sanctions against her country were having an adverse effect on women and children. He had stated that women — often the sole breadwinners — had been thrown out of work as factories had closed and they were exposed to the risk of trafficking or exploitation or could be driven to illegal migration.

21. One of the new challenges that had emerged since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was HIV/AIDS. Myanmar gave top priority to HIV/AIDS education and life-skills training for women and girls and, in collaboration with NGOs, had implemented various programmes to support those living with HIV/AIDS.

22. **Ms. Hastaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that women's empowerment was one of the keys to eradicating poverty. Yet women worldwide were still at a disadvantage politically, socially and economically. There were many dimensions to the issue and it could be dealt with only if viewed in a larger context, as a mainstreamed component of an integrated strategy at the national and international levels. Globalization, although seen by some as a threat to national cultures and societies, was itself a multifaceted phenomenon and offered opportunities in that regard provided it was properly directed.

23. Violence against women was an old and highly pervasive phenomenon. Its elimination depended on effective government action and the cooperation of civil society.

24. The forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women would be an opportunity for all States to devote proper attention to key emerging issues, identify the challenges that lay ahead and build up a new momentum for more effective cooperation.

25. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) said that despite the great strides that had been made in terms of political commitments, legislative frameworks, policy development and institutional mechanisms, women were still underrepresented in decision-making, suffered from discriminatory laws and were the victims of violence and poverty.

26. In Zambia, gender disparities arising in part from strongly entrenched cultural norms prevented the country's human-resource potential from being exploited to the full. In recognition of that fact, his Government had established an agency for gender mainstreaming and had developed a gender policy covering all sectors in order to redress imbalances in access to education and training and in participation in decision-making.

27. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's reports, which covered some of the challenges involved, and in particular, efforts by the General Assembly itself to apply gender-mainstreaming strategies. It noted, however, that although women and gender equality received greater coverage in the reports of the various committees, those reports failed to provide a thorough analysis or to give definitive guidance. His delegation would like to see more concrete proposals and recommendations for the enhancement of gender mainstreaming.

28. Since the Beijing Conference, Zambia had prioritized efforts to combat violence against women. The Constitution had been amended to establish a Human Rights Commission and, as part of the police-reform programme, a victim-support unit had been set up to deal with issues relating to vulnerable groups, including gender-based violence.

29. His delegation commended the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners for their assistance to Governments in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; it would like to see greater adherence to the Convention, which was a truly comprehensive treaty on women's human rights.

30. **Mr. Koubaa** (Tunisia) said Tunisia had taken a range of measures to guarantee equal rights for citizens of both sexes and to ensure a balance within the family, notably through the principle of partnership and joint responsibility in marriage.

31. Tunisia's policies on the advancement of women had had a beneficial effect on society as a whole. In particular, they had been instrumental in bringing population growth under control. Moreover, women who went out to work made a vital contribution to the financial health of their families, which meant their children received better care.

32. Social and economic change and other pressures notwithstanding, the family continued to play a vital part in society and human development and in economic and social well-being, a role his Government believed should be reinforced through policies to promote the cohesion, well-being and dignity of families themselves and their members.

33. Tunisia continued to be concerned at the precarious situation of female migrant workers and called on the Governments of countries of origin and

destination to step up their efforts to promote and protect their rights through cooperation at every level.

34. Lastly, he said the situation of women in the occupied Arab territories, and particularly of Palestinian women, who suffered systematic violations of their fundamental rights, including the right to life, was unacceptable and contrary to the spirit and letter of international human-rights and humanitarian law.

35. **Ms. Oubida** (Burkina Faso) said that, since the Beijing Conference in 1995, Burkina Faso had made efforts to enhance the role of women in society and ensure their full participation in the country's development, by creating a Ministry for the Advancement of Women, adopting plans of action, ratifying international conventions that protected the rights of women and children, and taking part in relevant national and international meetings.

36. The Government, in collaboration with the different stakeholders, had elaborated a national policy for the promotion of women 2005-2015, based on the need to combat gender inequalities while respecting human rights. Its strategic objectives were to raise the social and legal status of women; encourage their access to decision-making positions; improve education and training for women; promote mother and child health care; reduce feminine poverty; and strengthen institutional mechanisms. The policy would be implemented by action plans and by mainstreaming gender issues in sectoral policies and programmes.

37. In the fight against poverty, the Government, in collaboration with civil society and technical and financial partners, was establishing provincial training centres for women; providing training and appropriate technology to women's groups; and advocating the access of women to decision-making bodies.

38. Nevertheless, it was necessary to continue information, education and advocacy activities to ensure sustainable development based on gender equality; strengthen technical and organizational capabilities; work towards agrarian reform, including equal access to land; and expand affirmative action to raise the level of education and training of women.

39. The rapid culmination of negotiations on the draft international convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities was of the utmost importance, since in Burkina Faso two thirds of such persons were women. Burkina Faso therefore welcomed the forthcoming subregional meeting on the draft convention to be held in Ouagadougou, with an eye to harmonizing the different points of view.

40. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) said that Azerbaijan had signed and ratified all major international legal instruments on women and was working towards mainstreaming the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action into State policy at all levels. The State Committee for Women's Issues was working closely with a network of gender focal points throughout the country on awareness-raising and enhancing the economic and social status of women in rural areas. Government programmes were also being implemented covering gender equality, elimination of violence against women, reproductive health, education, and increased participation in politics and the economy. Azerbaijan was preparing a legislative framework on gender equality and domestic violence; however, women still faced serious problems arising from economic insecurity, forced displacement and social stereotyping.

41. There was now increased public and State awareness concerning trafficking in persons, particularly women. Azerbaijan had signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols. It had adopted a national counter-trafficking plan of action and was collaborating with relevant United Nations agencies to that end. The legislation being drafted would cover violence against women, including trafficking.

42. In the area of the economic empowerment of women, there was a need to create conditions for equal participation in the labour market, the elimination of stereotypes, and equal access to information, education and training. Until women played a more active economic role, their possibilities of political participation and involvement in decision-making were limited. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) played an important part in strengthening women's economic security and rights and Azerbaijan would welcome its continuing attention to those key issues at the national level, particularly by ensuring women's access to training and technology.

43. Her delegation strongly supported the idea of addressing gender concerns in the context of the follow-up to all major United Nations conferences, including the Millennium Summit. Gender issues were highly relevant to achieving the Millennium

Development Goals concerning the environment, sustainable development and universal access to health care. Success in many of the goals would enhance gender equality. In that context, in 2005 Azerbaijan would host the international expert meeting on linkages between the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

44. Gender mainstreaming had been defined as a basic strategy for promoting gender equality and the rights of women. Inter-agency coordination, the capacity-building of United Nations staff and dissemination of information on good practices and lessons learned was therefore most important. However, the lack of adequate funding for gender mainstreaming placed serious constraints on implementation.

45. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) concurred with the Secretary-General that, despite a quantitative increase in references to women and gender equality in reports and resolutions submitted to the Main Committees of the General Assembly, there was still limited qualitative attention and specific recommendations on action to be taken. Member States and the relevant United Nations bodies should redouble efforts to improve that aspect in order to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at all levels.

46. The recent high-level meeting in Thailand to review regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had culminated in the Bangkok Communiqué, which described the progress made, the shortcomings, and the challenges that lay ahead. Thailand attached particular importance to improving reproductive health services, especially for marginalized women and girls; reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS; supporting gender mainstreaming so as to ensure gender-responsive implementation of policies and plans; alleviating poverty, while addressing the negative impact of globalization; and supporting independent media to counter negative and stereotypical portrayal of women and girls.

47. Poverty eradication was a top priority of the Government, and efforts had continued in order to implement income-generation programmes for women at the grass-roots level and to identify export markets. Thailand was ready to share its experiences and collaborate with countries interested in jointly promoting similar initiatives for the advancement of women. In the area of education, it had already achieved the Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparities and was now working to increase educational opportunities for women.

48. Thailand had taken measures to tackle both domestic and cross-border sex trafficking by cooperating with other Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations at all levels. A national agenda had been proclaimed with six major policy guidelines and a specific budget for implementation.

49. Regarding family and health issues, programmes addressing violence against women stressed greater involvement of men and boys. Family centres had been established to provide advice to both women and men. At the Fifteenth International AIDS Conference, recently held in Bangkok, Thailand had highlighted the problems of mother-to-child transmission and the increasing number of young women affected by the disease, while advocating greater international cooperation to tackle the pandemic.

50. While there had been a gradual improvement in women's participation in politics and high-level government positions, the situation was not yet satisfactory, particularly at the national level, since it took time to change entrenched stereotypes and values. Nonetheless, the Government had taken a proactive stance and, in the current National Economic and Social Development Plan, a crucial strategy was the enhancement of women's political potential, seeking to double the number of women in Parliament, local administrative organizations and executive positions in the civil service by 2006.

51. **Mr. Tesfu** (Ethiopia) noted the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session (A/59/214) referred to gender-mainstreaming within the United Nations system, while the Commission on the Status of Women, at its next session, would focus on action at the national level. Hence, it was important that Governments and civil society from developing countries, particularly in Africa, were well represented at that session. A balanced and truly global outcome was possible only if the voices of the marginalized were heard.

52. Ethiopia agreed with the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report on trafficking in women and

girls (A/59/185) that comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation should be adopted and enforced. However, it was also important to conclude bilateral agreements to ensure the protection of victims and the prosecution of offenders. International assistance to enhance the law-enforcement capacity of developing countries in that area was critical.

53. Member States had continued to improve legislation on all forms of violence against women. However, for many developing countries with limited judicial and law-enforcement capabilities, awareness-raising about all forms of violence at the grass-roots level was more effective. International cooperation should therefore focus on the expansion of gender-sensitive education through both formal and informal channels.

54. Ethiopia had submitted its combined fourth and fifth report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in January 2004. It had ratified the respective Convention in 1981 and had made its provisions part of the Constitution; it had also repealed discriminatory provisions in family law. Draft legislation addressing the discriminatory provisions of the Penal Code was before Parliament; it included provisions that outlawed female genital mutilation, abduction and domestic violence, raised minimum penalties and established legal grounds for terminating pregnancies. Ethiopia was also taking measures to close the gender gap in education.

55. Despite those improvements, Ethiopian women still lived in extreme poverty; maternal mortality was among the highest in the world; the majority of those infected with HIV/AIDS were women; and women faced numerous harmful traditional practices that could not be overcome by legislation alone. Furthermore, trafficking in women had increased to some extent. Ethiopia hoped that global partnerships would enhance its domestic effort to build on the progress made and address the daunting tasks that remained in order to ensure gender equality.

56. **Ms. Tincopa** (Peru) said that the protection of human rights was an essential element of gender equality, non-discrimination and elimination of violence, which were the pillars of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Peru had demonstrated its political will to work at all levels to put into practice the commitments it had assumed at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean had developed a series of activities to follow up the region's achievements.

57. Development was possible only in a broadly based democratic society with strong institutions founded on social equity, gender equality and non-discrimination. In that context, poverty eradication was an urgent priority in which women must play a pivotal role. Accordingly, Peru reaffirmed its intention to involve women fully in all areas of national affairs, affording them equal opportunities, guaranteeing their rights, eliminating all forms of violence, fighting discrimination and promoting young people's interest in politics.

58. Political training of leaders was provided — especially for women, ethnic minorities and young people — in an effort to promote education for democracy and civic duty among all social strata, especially in schools in order to foster their full participation in development. In that connection, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had held a series of workshops in Peru on training in human rights, especially economic and social rights, which served as a basis for equal-opportunity plans.

59. Although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been ratified almost universally, gender inequalities were on the rise, while in many countries the abuse of women and girls, domestic violence, human trafficking, forced prostitution and racism persisted. In that regard, she commended the work of INSTRAW and supported its work programme for 2005.

60. Like many developing countries, her own was beset by serious challenges on the eve of the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform and the Millennium Development Goals. While poverty reduction was a top priority, Peru was also taking a holistic, human-rights-oriented approach to HIV/AIDS among women and girls through awareness, prevention and treatment campaigns. It continued to assign priority to dialogue and cooperation between the State, the private sector and the non-governmental organizations, whose collaboration and support did much to lighten the task. In conclusion, she acknowledged the central role of the Commission on the Status of Women in its follow-up to the Beijing Platform and the twenty-third special

session, and pledged her delegation's support in that task.

61. **Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) said that women in Mali, faced the complex challenges of domestic labour, illiteracy, lack of training and information, poverty, and poor health care, all of which accounted for their inferior status despite the Constitution's recognition of gender equality. Those problems were exacerbated by the structural-adjustment programme and progressive environmental degradation, to say nothing of international developments such as farm subsidies and illegal trade barriers that militated against the full flowering of Malian society and of Malian women in particular.

62. Successive Governments had endeavoured to reverse that trend through vigorous action for the ad ancement of women in many areas. The efforts included access to credit, technology and training in modern agricultural techniques, including food preservation, accounting and marketing. Health measures included efforts to eradicate unhealthy practices among mothers and children, adoption of a law on reproductive health, raising of health awareness, and briefing sessions on reproductive health for public officials.

63. In the field of education, literacy programmes had been devised and some villages had received teaching materials and school equipment. In addition, training was provided for migrant women and girls, especially girls who did not attend school. In an attempt to promote and protect women's rights, advice was dispensed in law clinics and counselling centres in certain administrative regions, and a centre on the rights of the child and the family had been established. Improvement of the status of women was covered by the Mali Family Code, and the population had been issued with information kits on the elimination of discrimination against women. A plan of action to combat violence against women was being implemented as part of an Africa-wide cam; aign.

64. Training and advocacy had increased the number of women in government and those elected to public office, while efforts to protect the environment focused on training women in better management and use of resources, and making better homes more widely available. Mali remained faithful to its national and international commitments and had recently submitted its second, third, fourth and fifth reports on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He urged States parties to give thought to a better mechanism for the consideration of reports in order to reduce the enormous backlog.

65. **Ms. Baleseng** (Botswana) observed that the forthcoming review by the Commission on the Status of Women of the Beijing Platform for Action should be part of the review of the Millennium Development Goals. That contribution should redound to the benefit of the world's women and girls who yearned for empowerment and equalit Her delegation was heartened by the emerging consensus among the international con. unity that, rather than renegotiate existing commitments, the only effective avenue towards the advancement of women was to explore innovative ways of implementing them. The objective of the 2005 high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly should be the enhancement of gender mainstreaming in all Millennium Development Goals.

66. Despite concerted international efforts, gender-based violence was on the increase and, in countries where HIV/AIDS and poverty were endemic, had the potential to aggravate the spread of the disease. In their determination to eliminate violence, Botswana had take legislative and educational measures and eagerly awaited the outcome of the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women requested by the General Assembly in resolution 58/185.

67. The current celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the fact that its universal ratification was in sight should encourage countries that had not done so to accede to it, and serve as an occasion for recommitment to its full implementation. It was imperative that the goals of the Convention should be translated into concrete national policies and legislation geared to universal gender equality. The Government would shortly be submitting its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and was considering accession to its Optional Protocol.

68. **Ms. Christofides** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) observed that virtually every Member State was affected by the growing trend in human trafficking, as a country of origin or transit or both, involving some 80,000 people, especially women and children. The changing patterns of the criminal

organizations made the prevention of trafficking a daunting task. A recent assessment in the Balkans had found that organized-crime rings now moved their victims from visible places to private premises, improving their standard of living and working conditions as a disincentive for them to contact the police or attempt escape, thereby ensuring a measure of control over them.

69. In an effort to combat human trafficking, IOM was implementing a threefold strategy of prevention; protection and assistance; and capacity-building. The prevention segment comprised information campaigns in countries of origin and countries of destination alike. Protection and assistance included emergency shelter and accommodation, counselling and direct assistance to victims for their voluntary return and reintegration. Capacity-building for government agencies and non-governmental organizations included training in the provision of emergency, legal, medical and other social services, and enhanced effectiveness in the prosecution of the perpetrators.

70. The safety of victims and the protection of their human rights were the key objectives of direct assistance. In its efforts to provide those and to cooperate with Governments and concerned partners, IOM had, inter alia, standardized its approach to direct assistance in its Counter-Trafficking Handbook covering six areas: ethical principles in caring for trafficked persons; security, personal safety and screening of victims; referral and reintegration assistance; shelter management; health concerns for victims and IOM staff; and law-enforcement cooperation and data management.

71. The international community must take non-coercive coordinated action to further strengthen its cooperation among Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations so as to keep the problem of trafficking on the international agenda. IOM stood ready and committed to share its counter-trafficking expertise with Governments and interested partners in order to increase awareness and assist each and every victim.

72. **Mr. Husain** (Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)) remarked that, under Islamic teaching, men and women were created equal with different roles and functions, so that equality under the law and in all other aspects of life was a principled aim of national policies and development efforts of OIC member States. Anomalies in national legislation caused by degeneration of societal or communal values, especially during colonial rule, were currently being identified and resolutely remedied, although the process might sometimes be slow, owing to entrenched societal practices and economic and other constraints.

73. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on violence against women (A/59/281), he said it was gratifying that the issue of violence was receiving increased attention worldwide and that legislative efforts to address it were being accelerated. Islam had zero tolerance for any kind of violence against men or women, and measures to outlaw it in national legislation merely reflected compliance with the teachings of Islam. In addition, OIC was prepared to cooperate in the in-depth study to be undertaken by the Secretary-General on violence against women and to participate in the planned expert meetings. It also appeared from the report that Governments might be helped to accelerate the preparation of a comprehensive legislative framework for criminalizing the offence and establishing appropriate penalties, and to work with national associations, religious bodies and research institutions to improve support services for victims, as well as for preventive and corrective measures.

74. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in June 2004 had reiterated its intention to convene a ministerial conference on women to devise a plan for enhancing their role in the development of societies in OIC member States and to afford more genuine opportunities for women in all walks of life. The Conference's General Secretariat had been mandated to coordinate the development of relationships among women's associations in member States. In that endeavour, the Conference would be prepared to discuss with the appropriate officials the possibility of support and cooperation from the United Nations and its agencies.

75. He congratulated Turkey on three of its nationals' simultaneous occupation of the position of Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women and the current chairmanship of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

76. OIC strongly supported efforts to enable women to play a pivotal role in the family and society, in

accordance with the Shariah. Women played a major role in national and international efforts for the realization of internationally agreed commitments for poverty eradication, the war on disease and the pursuit of sustainable development. OIC reaffirmed its commitment to work with the United Nations in assisting countries that were members of both bodies in their efforts to promote a better understanding of the status of women and their political and socio-economic role, and to address the inequities they suffered as a result of changes that had occurred in stark contrast to Islamic precepts. OIC's partnership with the United Nations would shorten the journey towards the moral, harmonious and progressive environment of the global village envisaged by the Millennium Declaration and which was the common destiny of all.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.